

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Climate & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Held in the Committee Room 1, Council Offices Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB at 2.00 pm on
Thursday, 8 December 2022

PRESENT

Councillors: Norman MacRae MBE (Chairman) Charlie Maynard (Vice-Chair), Alaa Al-Yousuf (to item 33), Hugo Ashton, Michael Brooker (to item 38), Jill Bull, Andrew Coles, David Cooper, Andy Goodwin (from item 31), Nick Leverton, Martin McBride, Rosie Pearson and Alaric Smith.

Also present Councillors Andy Graham (Leader), Andrew Prosser (Cabinet Member for Climate Change), Michele Mead and Harry St John.

Officers: Bill Oddy (Assistant Director - Commercial Development), Scott Williams (Business Manager - Contracts, Environmental Services), Astrid Harvey (Strategic Policy and Partnerships Officer), Phil Measures (Service Leader), Susan McPherson (ERS Senior Officer), Hannah Kenyon (Climate Change Manager), Andrew Brown (Business Manager – Democratic Service), Michelle Ouzman and Janet Eustace (Democratic Services).

Other speakers: Beth Boughton and Chris Unwin (Ubico).

25. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 29 September 2022 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

26. **Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**

Apologies were received from Councillors Eaglestone, Fenton and R Smith. Councillors Bull and Leverton substituted for Councillors Eaglestone and Fenton.

27. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

28. **Participation of the Public**

No public were present.

29. **Ubico 2023/24 Business Plan**

Beth Boughton and Chris Unwin (Ubico) presented the draft Ubico Business Plan which would be submitted for formal approval in March or April 2023. The company has four priorities: People; Operational; Business Development and Climate. It is currently facing unprecedented challenges and risks with the global supply chain, increasing energy costs, Climate, Brexit and the aftermath of COVID but there are also opportunities. Ms Boughton talked about the importance of attracting and retaining the right staff, digitally reforming the operation and taking steps to reduce the impact of the business on the climate. Going forward the company needs to work with partners to assess their appetite for growth.

In discussions Councillors asked about vehicle breakdowns and repair programmes, missed collections and contamination. It was noted that the manufacturer of the vehicles

provided a very proactive service and that the floors to vehicles had been made stronger to cope with glass recycling. Beth Boughton talked about Ubico's biodiversity project to plant wildflower verges and it was agreed that information on who owns and maintains different stretches of verge would be circulated to Committee members. To date, Ubico has not had direct engagement with residents but they do receive feedback via the partner councils. It was confirmed that it was acceptable for operatives to receive small Christmas gifts under £30 in value. It was noted that a more detailed plan with budget figures would be available in coming months.

The Chair thanked Beth Boughton and Chris Unwin for their report

Councillor Goodwin joined the meeting at this point.

30. **Air Quality Update**

Phil Measures (Service Leader) and Susan McPherson (ERS Senior Officer) gave a presentation on Air Quality. They explained that there were two areas in the District (the centres of Witney and Chipping Norton) which had failed to comply with national Air Quality Standards. Two action plans had been produced but less progress had been made than had been hoped and plans were now out of date. Consultants had therefore been appointed to produce new plans. A steering group would be set up to consider mitigation measure with a view to submitting a report to Defra by May 2023. It was confirmed that the review would take into account highway improvements with traffic surveys being undertaken. The increase in electric vehicles would also be factored in.

The Committee noted that although raw data was available on a regular basis this was adjusted by Defra before publication. Councillors requested that air quality on the A40 at Eynsham should be tested.

The Committee **Resolved** to note the report and asked that further air quality data be brought to the March meeting of the Committee.

31. **West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2023 - 2027**

Astrid Harvey, Strategic Policy and Partnerships Officer, introduced this item. She explained that the Council's new corporate plan for 2023-27 was being developed in order to succeed the previous plan that covered the period 2020-24. The report provided an opportunity for the Committee to comment on a draft of the Plan and for their views and insights to be taken into account in developing the final version of the Plan which would be presented to Cabinet in January.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- Might the priorities be presented in a circular fashion rather than linear to make it clear that there is no hierarchy?
- The plan lacks innovation
- There is too much 'Council Speak'
- Is there to be a separate version for the public?
- More clarity is needed about whether the document sets out actions, aspirations or values. As drafted the priorities are a mixture of all three.
- Page 3, the print is too small
- There needs to be more detail about improvements to infrastructure. Could this be given more prominence under a 'Good Quality of Life for All'?

- It is an attractive document which clearer sets out the Council's aspirations.

In summary, Councillor Graham (Leader) said that there would be a detailed action plan underpinning this high level Council Plan. The Plan had been subject to public consultation. Comments from the Scrutiny Committees would be considered and some further minor amendments made.

32. **Carbon Action Plan - Update**

Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager, introduced the report on electric vehicle charging. She explained that electric vehicle chargers had been installed in five public car parks across the District, as part of Park and Charge Oxfordshire. The initiative was funded by The Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) and Innovate UK and the chargers are run by EZ-Charge, at no cost to the Council. These charges should generate a modest income from years 7/8. She was now looking to identify new locations for chargers. Oxfordshire County Council had said that LEVI funding may be available in the spring and it made sense to tap into this. A collaborative approach across the county would be most likely to attract funding and provide a good customer experience.

The Climate Change Manager confirmed that chargers at the Woodgreen Offices were being considered as part of the Agile Working project. She added that she was exploring a community based scheme with Oxford County Council, where chargers would be installed for free with the maintenance passing to the Town and Parish Councils. The Committee suggested that a small working group could be set up to consider how best to take this forward. On street charging solutions are also available but are expensive.

The Committee welcomed the progress made to date on the project and noted the need to make the chargers readily accessible. The data showed that many people were using the chargers for relatively short periods. It was noted that the LEVI fund aims to provide off-street charging for residents overnight, however the chargers could also be used by shoppers and visitors during the day. The Climate Change Manager said she would establish details about the projected lifespan of the chargers.

The Committee **Resolved** to note the report.

Councillor Al-Yousuf left the meeting during this item.

33. **Service Performance Report - Quarter 2**

The Committee received Service Performance Report 2022-23 Quarter Two.

It was noted that fly tipping had reduced following the creation of a new post to tackle the problem. The Assistant Director Assistant Director - Commercial Development said he would bring a report to the March meeting of the Committee.

The Committee **Resolved** to note the report.

34. **Committee Work Programme**

The Committee received the Work Programme for 2022/23.

It was noted that two new items should be included for May: an Air Quality report and a report on fly tipping. It was suggested that there should be an all member briefing on measures being taken upstream to reduce flooding risk in the upper reaches of the Windrush and Evenlode.

The Committee **Resolved** to note the report.

35. **Cabinet Work Programme**

It was noted that the review of the Council's grant schemes would address the Council's priorities on Climate.

The Committee **Resolved** to note the report.

36. **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

The Committee Resolved to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

37. **Waste Service Review - Briefing on Waste Collection Options Appraisal**

Scott Williams, Business Manager - Contracts, Environmental Services, briefed on the Waste Collection Options Appraisal.

Councillors had received a confidential report prior to the meeting that had been commissioned to provide an independent waste collection options appraisal. This had resulted in nine options which had since been narrowed down to three one of which was the current baseline.

Councillors were invited to ask questions and to comment on the options that they had been briefed upon and the independent report.

In discussion Councillors queried the impact of the changes on the amount of recycling undertaken, whether residents would be consulted on the changes, concerns about the procurement process and why the Council had previously made a decision to move away from kerbside recycling.

It was noted that a further report on the subject would be brought forward in the New Year.

The meeting ended at 5.00 pm.

CHAIR